

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 2039

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CU, MX

SUBJ: IMPRESSIONS OF ECHEVERRIA'S EMISSARY TO CASTRO

REF: MEXICO 1350

1. WHEN I SAW JUAN JOSE BREMER, (ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF PRESIDENCY) TO DELIVER PRESIDENT FORD'S REPLY TO ECHEVERRIA RE NARCOTICS, I ASKED HIM ABOUT HIS RECENT (SO FAR COMPLETELY UNPUBLICIZED) TRIP TO HAVANA ON WHICH HE ACCOMPANIED FERNANDO GUTIERREA BARRIOS, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF INTERIOR (SEE REF). BREMER SAID: (A) THE TRIP WAS UNEVENTFUL AND ITS OSTENSIVE MOTIVE HAD BEEN TO DELIVER A GIFT OF BOOKS TO CASTRO; WHO WAS A VORACIOUS READER, AND WHO HAD CANCELLED HIS VISIT TO MEXICO. (B) THE CANCELLATION WAS WELCOME TO THE GOM, AS CASTRO'S PRESENCE IN THE WAKE OF ANGOLA WOULD HAVE BEEN TROUBLESOME. (C) WHILE IN HABANA, THEY HAD BEEN INVITED TO A MEAL BY CARLOS RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ; LATER FIDEL CASTRO HAD CALLED AT THEIR HOTEL AND SPENT AN HOUR AND FORTY-FIVE MINUTES TALKING PRIVATELY. (D) BOTH CASTRO AND RODRIGUEZ SHOWED NO SIGNS OF A GUILTY CONSCIENCE RE ANGOLA. BOTH MAINTAINED THAT CUBA HAD DONE IT ON ITS OWN TO HELP A THIRD WORLD COUNTRY THREATENED BY THE IMPERIALIST SOUTH AFRICANS AND INSISTED THAT THEY HAD NOT ACTED ON SOVIET INSISTENCE. (E) IN ADDITION TO THE
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PREVIOUS EXCUSES GIVEN FOR CANCELLING THE TRIP TO MEXICO

(MOSCOW MEETING OF COMMUNIST PARTIES, AND THE "SITUATION IN AFRICA") CASTRO SPOKE OF THE NEED TO BE IN CUBA FOR THE VOTING AND ITS AFTERMATH ON THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE REGIME, THROUGH A NEW CONSTITUTION. (F) BREMER VOLUNTEERED THAT, AS USUAL IN CUBA AND SOVIET BLOC COUNTRIES, THEY WERE PERMITTED TO SEE ONLY WHAT THE REGIME WANTED THEM TO SEE.

2. IN A SEPARATE CONVERSATION WITH ONE OF LOPEZ PORTILLO'S CAMPAIGN MEMBERS, I WAS TOLD THAT THERE IS SOME DISCOMFITURE AMONG THE CANDIDATE'S ADVISERS AS TO THE PUBLIC REACTION TO THE NEWS (SO FAR LITTLE PUBLICIZED) THAT EHCHEVERRIA IS BUILDING A NEW EMBASSY AS A GIFT TO CASTRO'S CUBA. WHILE THIS PURPORTEDLY IN EXCHANGE FOR AN EMBASSY BUILDING PROVIDED BY CASTRO TO MEXICO, THE LATTER IS A REQUISITIONED MANSION (FORMERLY THE PROPERTY OF THE VALLE FAMILY) WHICH COST CASTRO NOTHING, WHILE THE MEXICO CITY BUILDING WILL COST A SMALL FORTUNE. THE CONTRACT BETWEEN WHAT IS BEING SPENT BY MEXICO ON THE NEW EMBASSY OF CUBA HERE AND THE RUN-DOWN STATE OF SOME OF MEXICO'S OWN DIPLOMATIC ESTABLISHMENTS WAS ALSO MENTIONED.
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